



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2024



UPDATES

Multi-study dissemination event shares findings on children and adolescent health

On October 9, 2024, THRU ZIM hosted a national multi-study dissemination event in Harare, attracting over 80 stakeholders across diverse sectors. This gathering spotlighted key findings from THRU ZIM's VITALITY, CORD, Y-Check, and Kids with Kids studies, highlighting collaborative approaches to improve children and adolescents' health and well-being.

VITALITY Trial

Dr. Nyasha Dzavakwa, Dr Vicky Simms and Mr Tafadzwa Madanhire presented key findings from the VITALITY trial, which investigate the effect of once weekly high-dose vitamin D and one daily calcium carbonate or placebo for 48 weeks on musculoskeletal health in adolescents with perinatally-acquired HIV. While the trial showed no overall difference in bone density between intervention and control groups after 48 weeks, there was a significant improvement in bone density among adolescents with vitamin D insufficiency, who made up nearly 75% of participants.

CORD Study

The CORD study- presented by Dr. Edith Majonga, explored cardiac health in adolescents with HIV who have been on long-term antiretroviral therapy (ART). Using advanced cardiac imaging, the study assessed heart function and identified structural changes in adolescents with HIV compared to those without. Additionally, adolescents who were not virally suppressed showed reduced heart function. These findings underscore the importance of long-term follow-up to understand the clinical implications and enhance health outcomes for young people with HIV.



Bridging research and practice- Study leads share key findings that will shape future initiatives.

Y-Check Study

Dr. Farrie Nzvere and Dr. Aoife Doyle presented an overview of the Y-Check program, which implemented and evaluated innovative health and well-being check-ups for adolescents in Chitungwiza. The study identified a large unmet need for health promotive and curative care, while showing evidence of a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of adolescents in Chitungwiza. Michaela Takawira shared the cost analysis that detailed the financial implications of implementing the program, offering valuable insights into resource requirements. Additionally, Dr. Salome Manyau presented on the process evaluation which found the check-ups to be acceptable and feasible, providing stakeholders with guidance for future implementation.

Kids with Kids Study

Dr. Svitlana Austin and Nonhlanhla Nondo presented qualitative findings from the Kids with Kids study, which explored the lived experiences of pregnant children. This research brought to light significant socioeconomic vulnerabilities including food insecurity, moderate to severe depression, exacerbated by financial strain and social isolation. The findings highlight an urgent need for targeted interventions to address the complex challenges faced by these young mothers, including mental health support and resources for education and economic stability.

The event concluded with an interactive Q&A session, fostering dialogue between stakeholders, study participants and the research teams. The multi-study dissemination event marks a milestone in THRU ZIM's mission to enhance adolescent and children's health outcomes in Zimbabwe, setting a foundation for evidence-based research, policy-making, and program development.



A vibrant exchange of ideas: Stakeholders contributed to lively discussions that fostered collaboration

Global health experts present innovative solutions in neonatal and childhood illnesses

This October, THRU ZIM hosted Dr. Jonathan Stryko and Dr. Mamadu Baldeh, who shared their pioneering work aimed at improving child health outcomes in resource-limited settings.

Dr. Jonathan Stryko on preventing infections in the neonatal unit

On October 9, Dr. Jonathan Stryko, from Botswana presented his work on preventing infections in the neonatal unit using a One Health Approach. As a pediatrician and infectious disease epidemiologist, Dr. Stryko has dedicated his career to improving neonatal health outcomes. His research focuses on preventing neonatal sepsis, a major cause of infant mortality. Dr. Stryko emphasized the importance of a collaborative One Health approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health efforts.

During his talk at THRU ZIM, Dr. Jonathan Stryko also engaged with Dr Gwendoline Chimhini from Sally Mugabe Hospital and Dr Alex Stevenson from Parirenyatwa Hospital, sharing his expertise on neonatal sepsis prevention. This interaction provided an invaluable opportunity for local healthcare providers to gain insights into advanced practices in neonatal care and infection prevention, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange in addressing critical health challenges in Zimbabwe.

Mamadu Baldeh on digital diagnostics for childhood febrile illnesses

On October 17, Dr Mamadu Baldeh, a public health physician from Sierra Leone, introduced his groundbreaking work on Point-of-Care Digital Diagnostics for childhood febrile illnesses. His work in The Gambia, in collaboration with the Neotree project, is designed to enhance the diagnosis and management of febrile illnesses, which are a leading cause of death in young children.

Mamadu's innovative digital diagnostic tools aim to make healthcare more accessible in resource-limited settings, allowing for quicker, more accurate diagnoses at the point of care. His presentation was well-received by the audience, who recognized the potential of such technology to transform healthcare in regions with limited infrastructure.

Both talks underscored the importance of research-driven solutions to address critical challenges in global child health. Dr. Stryko's focus on neonatal sepsis and Mamadu's work on digital diagnostics offered actionable insights for researchers and healthcare professionals.



Doctors Stryko and Baldeh share groundbreaking work to improve child health in resource-limited settings.

Neotree wins the 2024 Foundation Pierre Fabre Award

We are thrilled to announce that Neotree has received the prestigious 2024 Foundation Pierre Fabre Award in the Global South E-Health Observatory category. This honor recognizes Neotree's innovative digital solutions, which support health professionals with training and decision-making tools aimed at reducing newborn mortality in low-income countries.

Neotree's Principal Investigators, Professor Michelle Heys and Dr. Simbarashe Chimhuya, proudly accepted the award in France.

Following the award ceremony, Professor Heys participated in a radio interview with Radio France Internationale, where she discussed Neotree's impactful work. You can listen to the interview here: [Projets novateurs en santé numérique, pour améliorer l'accès aux soins - Priorité santé \(rfi.fr\)](https://www.rfi.fr/fr/actualites/20241015-projets-novateurs-en-sante-numerique-pour-ameliorer-lacces-aux-soins-priorite-sante).

Congratulations to the entire Neotree team on this outstanding achievement!



Professor Michelle Heys and Dr. Simbarashe Chimhuya receive the 2024 Foundation Pierre Fabre Award

Family fun day at Neotree: laughs, games, and lasting memories!

On October 11th, Neotree proudly hosted a spectacular family day, bringing together team members and their families for a fun filled afternoon. This event provided an opportunity for colleagues to bond outside of the workplace and build a sense of community. Activities designed for all ages encouraged teamwork and collaboration, allowing families to engage with one another and share experiences.



Neotree Family Day: Building bonds beyond the workplace!

Exciting new chapter for KOSHESAI study

The KOSHESAI study has embarked on an exciting new phase, advancing both the main study and Maureen's PhD journey. 21 October 2024 marked the onset of support group leaders 'champions' training in Highfield and Mufakose led by Maureen, supported by the wider KOSHESAI Team. The training is focusing on Healthy-Minds Community Healthy Ageing Peer-to-Peer Support (CHAPS) groups that are set for delivery in the first quarter of 2025 as KOSHESAI study unfolds in Highfield and Mufakose.

The champions training will run bi-weekly for 8 weeks in community halls in Highfield and Mufakose. The Healthy-Minds CHAPS champions training is focusing on three key components: dementia awareness information sharing, group physical activity and the adapted cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) for older people living with dementia.

With a built-in evaluation to measure community impact, the KOSHESAI team is eager to launch this transformative program, laying a foundation for improved health and social support among older adults. Exciting times lie ahead, stay tuned!!!



Support group leaders training in progress in Highfield and Mufakose.

5 MINUTES WITH...

David Hettle



What do you do and when do you start?

I am a doctor working in Infectious Diseases and Microbiology in Bristol, UK. I have been working as a doctor for the last 12 years (including 8 months in Katete, Zambia) and have a Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. I've also become more involved in medical education in the last few years, recently completing my MSc in Teaching and Learning for Health Professionals from the University of Bristol and working as a senior teaching fellow helping students and doctors develop as educators.

I arrived in Harare the beginning of September, along with my family – my wife Rachel, who is a paediatrics doctor, and our two girls. My role is a Global Health Fellow, linking between the University of Bristol and the Health Research Unit, and I will be largely working on the AVAPAR study, exploring the use of molecular diagnostics in the management of infection and exploring the impact on patient care and antibiotic prescriptions. I will also be looking into antimicrobial prescribing practices, how these can be supported to improve, and work alongside the Neotree team in investigating the role of current guidelines in managing neonatal sepsis. Lastly, I'm looking forward to using my educational experience and to support project work in THRU-ZIM as well as supporting teaching and educator development in Parirenyatwa and Sally Mugabe hospitals and the University of Zimbabwe.

Who and/or what inspires you?

I've had lots of different inspirations and role models in my career so far, which means picking one person or team to focus on is very difficult. I feel lucky to have had opportunity to be an educator, as often students and learners' questions inspire me to find out more, look into an area more deeply or think how best to explain and develop something so that it becomes more easily understandable to others, and watching them address challenges helps me to wonder how to do this best as well.

Also, finding ways to help patient and families understand what is going on with their conditions or treatment, alongside often unsung, hard-working colleagues I've worked with in the past. Yet, most often I feel inspired by the strength of patients and ingenuity of colleagues, who think of ways to combat challenges amidst adversity that I couldn't imagine, and that inspires me to learn from how others face their challenges.

Why is being an Infectious Diseases/Microbiology doctor important and what do you enjoy about it?

Being a doctor is a huge privilege, which allows me to help support and care for individuals, work towards local improvements and broader changes within health systems. My specialties (Infectious Diseases and Microbiology) offer the chance to work with patients in hospitals, and also working in the laboratory to understand the processes important in achieving a diagnosis and discovering the right antibiotics to treat patients with. The best thing about any part of my role are the people, and working with and learning from them, whether it's patients, healthcare workers, families, researchers, students, fellow educators and probably lots more. Finding ways to work together to improve individual's or population's health is really great fun and rewarding.

PICTURES OF THE MONTH

PhD Scholars on the Rise!

Our scholars are tackling mountains—literally and academically! From scaling peaks to submitting PhD papers, each milestone marks a powerful step forward. Kudos to all of you for celebrating both the big and small victories along this journey.



Congratulations Farirayi on submitting your PhD thesis



PhD Scholars enjoy a hike in Domboshava,



Taking a well-deserved break! Our PhD scholars pause to capture the moment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New study funded: CAMFED livelihoods research

We are thrilled that we have a new study funded, evaluating CAMFED's livelihoods programme that supports young women in business and enterprise skills as they leave school. The study will run over three years, include adapting the Youth Researcher Academy to train and engage six youth researchers, iterative qualitative and ethnographic methods, and a survey at three time points to understand the impact of the programme on young women's lives, wellbeing, livelihoods, and sexual and reproductive health. The study PI is Constance Mackworth-Young, co-investigators are Ethel Dauya, Collins Timire, and Tsitsi Bandason, and the study coordinator is Noni Nondo.

EMPOWA-Zim goes global!

We are very pleased that the EMPOWA-Zim programme (EMpowering PrOfessionals for the Wellbeing of Adolescents in Zimbabwe) has received next phase funding to translate this programme, designed in partnership with University of Zimbabwe, to three other countries. The *Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health* are funding THRU Zim and LSHTM to write a global manual that details the design and implementation of the EMPOWA programme, and to support three partner research and teaching organisations to deliver the programme in their countries.

We are happy that this programme, which proved so successful in Zimbabwe, will now be delivered globally. The PI for this is Constance Mackworth-Young, with co-investigators Rashida Ferrand, Marvellous Mhloyi (University of Zimbabwe), Aveneni Mangombe (Ministry of Health and Child Care), and Jayjay Karumazondo (University of Zimbabwe).

THRU ZIM welcomes Margie Smith – expert CFO partner

We are thrilled to welcome Margie Smith, from The CFO Centre, as part of our upcoming collaboration. Margie brings invaluable financial leadership and strategic insight, having supported businesses across various sectors to drive growth and profitability.

During her visit (4-8November) she will be:

1. Getting to know us all, and understand a bit about THRU ZIM systems
2. Provide advice and guidance regarding (a) budgeting for grants, and (b) job contracts

OPPORTUNITIES

Smile and Shine: A Bright Opportunity for THRU-Zim Staff!

Have you ever dreamt of advancing your skills in ways that truly make a difference? Now's your chance! THRU-Zim is offering financial support to help employees grow through various development opportunities.

Interested? Head to the notice board for all the details on how to apply!

Share your news, publications, pictures, announcements: ellenchiyindiko@gmail.com.

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ThruZim>

THANK YOU!